Filed for intro on 05/25/2000

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 781 By Goins

A RESOLUTION to honor the Reverend Billy Graham and to welcome the Graham Crusade team to Nashville and the state of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, the Christian religion, drawing upon its Old Testament prophetic roots and the example of Jesus' own mission on Earth, grew explosively during the first three centuries of the Christian era; and

WHEREAS, since that time, Christianity's vitality has waxed and waned during the tides of history. That history has been punctuated by the appearance of certain charismatic preachers and teachers of the Gospel who have responded strongly to God's call and have gone out to make a dramatic impact on the lives of thousands of people by helping them to establish a personal relationship with their Creator; and

WHEREAS, one such dedicated servant of God is the Reverend Billy Graham, who, since his ordination to the ministry by a church in the Southern Baptist Convention in 1939, has preached to more people in live audiences than anyone else in history. He has addressed over

HJR0781

01409756

210 million people in more than 185 countries and territories. Television, video and film have made his messages available to hundreds of millions more; and

WHEREAS, William F. Graham was born November 7, 1918 in Charlotte, North Carolina to the late William Franklin and Morrow Coffey Graham. He learned the value of hard work on the family dairy farm, but still managed to read widely during his youth; and

WHEREAS, in the fall of 1934, a traveling evangelist, Mordecai Ham, brought his ministry to Charlotte and, at age 16, young Billy made a personal commitment to Christ. Five years later, he was ordained to the ministry; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Graham attended the Florida Bible Institute and in 1943 graduated from Wheaton College in Illinois, where he met and married Ruth McCue Bell, who had spent her early life in China as the daughter of a missionary surgeon; and

WHEREAS, Billy served as Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Western Springs, Illinois from 1943-45, and then spent the next five years as Charter Vice President of Youth for Christ International in Chicago. He preached throughout the United States and Europe, following the Second World War, and emerged as a promising evangelist; and

WHEREAS, a scheduled three-week crusade in Los Angeles in 1949 drew overflow crowds and was extended to eight weeks, projecting Mr. Graham into international prominence; in 1950, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association was founded in Minneapolis and the "Hour of Decision" radio program, now heard on more than 600 stations around the world, was launched; and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham's ministry has carried God's message around the world, including the world's major cities, remote African villages, most of the nations of the former Eastern bloc, and to both heads of state and humble tribesmen. Millions more are reached through crusade television specials, the newspaper column, "My Answer," *Decision* magazine, the productions of World Wide Pictures and the eighteen bestselling books written by Mr. Graham; and

- 2 - 01409756

WHEREAS, Mr. Graham has counseled Presidents of the United States and has received awards and honors including the Congressional Gold Medal, the Templeton Foundation Prize for Progress in Religion, the Big Brother Award, recognition by B'nai B'rith and the National Conference of Christians and Jews; he has received honorary degrees and other honors and awards too numerous to mention: and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham has appeared 42 times in the 54 years of the "Ten Most Admired Men in the World", has appeared on the covers of major news magazines in this country and has been the subject of countless magazine and newspaper feature articles and books: and

WHEREAS, despite all the trappings of fame inherent in a worldwide ministry, Mr.

Graham continues faithfully to follow his statement that, "My one purpose in life is to help people find a personal relationship with God, which, I believe, comes through knowing Christ"; and

WHEREAS, now at age 81, Mr. Graham looks back on a fruitful ministry of sixty-one years, having the love and support of his wife Ruth, children Virginia, Anne Morrow, Ruth Bell, William Franklin III, Nelson Edman, 19 grandchildren and many great-grandchildren; that ministry still continues and, in June, comes to Nashville and Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the Graham crusades take great care to work closely with local church leaders to lay the groundwork and provide for a follow-up ministry to those new hearers of God's call; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we honor the life and work of the Reverend Billy Graham in proclaiming God's message to humanity; we welcome him and the Billy Graham Crusade team to Nashville and the State of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.

- 3 - 01409756

- 4 - 01409756